

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA-03) and Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) re-introduced the "Every Student Counts Act" to prioritize graduation of all of our nation's high school students and help reduce the high school dropout rate.

Nearly 2,000 high schools - roughly 12 percent of all secondary schools in the United States - produce about half of the Nation's dropouts. These so called "dropout factories" produce almost three-fourths of black dropouts and two-thirds of Hispanic dropouts. Additionally, the number of seniors in these schools is routinely 60 percent or less than the number of freshmen three years earlier.

"The current high school accountability system is failing our students and our future as a nation. Almost one-third of all high school students in the United States fail to graduate with their peers and the numbers are worse for minorities as compared to non-minority students. Nationally, almost half of Black students do not graduate from high school and students with disabilities have the lowest four year graduation rates in the nation," said Rep. Scott.

"One of the greatest educational challenges we face is bringing down the dropout rate, especially for minorities and children with disabilities," said Senator Harkin. "As children drop out, they face a lifetime of fewer opportunities and lower earnings. Economically, our nation cannot afford to lose one million students each year. Morally, we cannot allow children to continue to fall through the cracks. This legislation puts us on the right track towards turning back the tide of high school dropouts."

The Every Student Counts Act will bring meaningful accountability to America's high schools by requiring a consistent and accurate calculation of graduation rates across all fifty states to ensure comparability and transparency. The legislation builds on the National Governors Association's Graduation Rate Compact, which was signed by all 50 of the Nation's governors in 2005.

Under the Every Student Counts Act, graduation rates and test scores are treated equally in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations. Moreover, the Every Student Counts Act would require high schools to have aggressive, attainable and uniform annual growth requirements as part of AYP. This will ensure consistent increases to graduation rates for all students by meeting annual, research-based benchmarks with the long-term goal of reaching a 90 percent graduation rate. The bill would also require the disaggregation of graduation data by subgroup to make certain that schools are held accountable for increasing the graduation rate

for all of our students and require that school improvement activities focus on closing any achievement gaps.

Recognizing that some small number of students take longer than four years to graduate, the bill will give credit to schools, school districts and states for graduating these students while maintaining the primacy of graduating the great preponderance of all students in four years. The Every Student Counts Act will provide incentives for schools, districts and states to create programs to serve students who have already dropped out and are over-age or under credited. Some credit has to be given to those who get a GED and also those who take more than one or two years and maybe even three years longer than others to graduate. If no credit is given, the school system has no incentive to continue these important programs.

Rep. Rubén Hinojosa, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness and an original cosponsor of the bill, commented: "I applaud Rep. Scott for all the work he has done to combat our nation's alarmingly low high school graduation rates. Now, more than ever, the standard must be that every student graduates, prepared for a postsecondary education and the 21st century workplace. The Every Student Counts Act will ensure that we are well on our way toward achieving that goal."

"It is my hope that with this bill, we can make great strides toward graduating more of America's students and preparing them to succeed in college and the workforce," concluded Rep. Scott.

The Every Student Counts Act was re-introduced in the House with 16 original co-sponsors. The bill is also supported in the 111th Congress by 30 national and state education, civil rights, and advocacy organizations, including National Parent Teacher Association, United Way, America's Promise Alliance, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and National Association of State Boards of Education, among others. That list is expected to continue to grow this Congress.

###